EVANGELISM

FEBRUARY 13, 2013 BY **EVANGELISMCOACH**

2 COMMENTS

Guest Article: The Seismic Shift in Evangelism

Do you understand that evangelism has changed?

Popular approaches you may have grown up with were great for their time, but new approaches to the unchanging gospel are necessary. Last week, James White sent out this post, and it's republished here with permission.

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The Seismic Shift in Outreach

There has been a seismic shift in outreach that few church leaders are understanding, much less pursuing.

From the 1950's to the 1980's, the vanguard of evangelistic outreach was direct proclamation of the gospel. Whether the crusades of Billy Graham or the creative approaches of Willow Creek Community Church, presentation led the way.

This led to joining a community, and eventually, being discipled into participation with the cause.

From the 1990's thru the 2000's, community took the lead. People wanted to belong before they believed. Skepticism was rampant, and trust had to be earned. Once enfolded, Christ was often met in the midst of that community.

Cause, again, was the last to take hold.

From the 2010's forward, "cause" has become the leading edge of our connection with a lost world, and specifically the "nones" (and it is increasingly best to replace the term "unchurched" with the "nones"). Consider the recent Passion Conference in Georgia. What arrested outside media attention was the commitment to eradicate modern-day slavery, not the 60,000 students in attendance much less the messages related to the Christian faith.

In a word, "cause."

This made the gathering of 60,000 college students in the Georgia Dome for that cause become attractional. In other words, then and only then did "community" come into play. Then, after exploring that community, Christ could be – and was – introduced.

Think of this shift in terms of moving people through stages of introduction:

1950's-1980's:

Unchurched >>> Christ >>> Community >>> Cause

1990's-2000's

Unchurched >>> Community >>> Christ >>> Cause

2010's –

Nones >>> Cause >>> Community >>> Christ

It is important to note how far the message of Christ is from the mind and sentiment of the average "none." It's not that the church should "bury the lead" in terms of putting Christ at the end of the line – remember, we're talking strategy. It's just that leading with Billy Graham's simple "The Bible says" was a strategy designed for people in a different place spiritually than many are today.

The more post-Christian a person is, the more evangelism must embrace not only "event/proclamation", but "process" and "event/proclamation." Earlier models were almost entirely "event/proclamation" oriented, such as revivals, crusades, or door-to-door visitation. As I've written about in other places, this is only effective in an Acts 2, God-fearing Jews of Jerusalem context.

"Process" models are needed in Acts 17, Mars Hill, nones/skeptical contexts.

Like the one we live in today.

The presentation of Christ must remain central to our thinking, to be sure. That is the only reason we are even talking about strategy; the goal is to present Christ and Him crucified. But is that where we start? On Mars Hill, the spiritual illiteracy was so deep that Paul had to begin with cultural touchstones, lead in to creation, and work his way forward.

It took him a while to get to Christ.

And community? It matters, but the average person has tastes of that already. Maybe not functional, but they don't seem as drawn to it as they used to be. Perhaps it is because of the lure and illusion of social media, or because they've simply given up on it, but it's not the great "search" it once was.

So there has been a great, seismic shift. Today, it is cause that arrests the attention of the world.

Which brings us to the challenge.

First, to recognize the seismic shift, and begin to strategize accordingly.

Second, to realize how difficult this will be. If cause is in the lead, and community close behind, the church is at a deficit. In the minds of many, our causes have been mundane (let's raise money for a fellowship hall!) or alienating (Moral Majority!). And the close second of community? Our reputation for dysfunction in that area is legendary.

But there is great irony in the challenge. Jesus wed mission and message together seamlessly, proclaiming the Kingdom that had come while healing the leper and feeding the hungry. He mandated concern for the widow and the orphan, the homeless and naked, the imprisoned and hungry, while speaking of the bread of life and a home in heaven.

In other words, we should have been nailing this all along.

And if community is lurking in the back of the minds of people as a felt need, that should be a calling card as well. Jesus challenged his followers about the importance of observable love toward one another as the ultimate apologetic for His life and ministry and message.

And even if it takes a while to get to Christ, He should be presented raw and unfiltered in all of His scandalous specificity. As Moltmann proclaimed, "the crucified God."

So as we ponder the rise of "cause" as the cultural bridge over which to walk, perhaps the greater truth is more elemental:

Do all three.

Imagine a church that had community, cause and the undiluted message of Christ in the vanguard of its efforts.

It might just become the church Jesus had in mind all along that would reach the world.

James Emery White

Editor's Note

James Emery White is the founding and senior pastor of Mecklenburg Community Church in Charlotte, NC, and the ranked adjunctive professor of theology and culture at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, which he also served as their fourth president. His newly released book is The Church in an Age of Crisis: 25 New Realities Facing Christianity (Baker Press). To enjoy a free subscription to the Church and Culture blog, log-on to www.churchandculture.org, where you can post your comments on this blog, view past blogs in our archive and read the latest church and culture news from around the world. Follow Dr. White on twitter @JamesEmeryWhite.

Filed Under: Evangelism Tagged With: Evangelism

JUNE 15, 2012 BY **EVANGELISMCOACH** 1 COMMENT

Tim Keller's 10 Personal Evangelism Tips

1. Let people around you know you are a Christian (in a natural, unforced way)
2. Ask friends about their faith – and just listen!
3. Listen to your friends problems – maybe offer to pray for them
4. Share your problems with others – testify to how your faith helps you
5. Give them a book to read
6. Share your story
7. Answer objections and questions

8. Invite them to a church event
9. Offer to read the Bible with them
10. Take them to an explore course

– Tim Keller [via: Salternlite]

Thanks for sharing the list.

You can download the message ($2.50) from the Redeemer Website here.

At the original post, various comment writers criticize this list for missing “share the gospel.”

The gist of the list is not how to share the gospel (that is assumed), but how to advance the personal 1-1 conversation about the gospel with your peers.

Filed Under: conversation, Evangelism, Personal Evangelism, Skills Tagged With: conversation skills, Personal Evangelism, Tim Keller

JUNE 8, 2012 BY **EVANGELISMCOACH**

LEAVE A COMMENT

Tim Keller on How churches reach cities – Lausanne Capetown 2010

Here’s a 17+ minute video of Tim Keller talking at Lausanne about how you reach cities by

1. Planting & renewing churches that are contextual to the city,
2. Establishing citywide gospel movements

By contextual churches, he speaks of planting a church that fits in your context. As part of that talk he gave these marks to becoming contextual

1. A multicultural church has to be extremely culturally sensitive. Your church must expect cultural and racial tensions and accusations of insensitivity. It will always be present.
2. Help people integrate work and faith. People go to cities to work.
3. Must have urban sensibility: comfortable with change, disorder,
4. Evangelism in cities needs to reach different cultures and people. One script does not fit all.
5. City Churches need to be famous in its care for the poor.
6. Artists must be taken seriously.
7. Relationships are extremely important for ministry in a urban context.
8. A city can't be reached by one church, or even one network. You need a city reaching movement.

Keller mentions 10 in his remarks, but I heard 8.

What is a city reaching movement?

When the Body of Christ is growing more rapidly than the general population. What creates a movement?

1. Five or six church planting movements in different denominations and networks. Don't work to increase your tribe, but to help others get going. Collaborate.
2. You need a

- network of prayer,
- evangelistic specialists to focus on universities and youth,
- work on justice and mercy issues,
- gatherings based on vocation (business people, artists, etc), and
- have leaders regularly meeting to discern together what the city needs (not turf wars).

Four questions (from Luasanne's guide):

1. How can the church develop a clearer awareness of the needs of the cities?
2. What has been the response of the church in your context to the increased movement of people to the cities?
3. What are adjustments that the church should make in order to respond to the needs of the city in a relevant way?
4. How can the global church be mobilized to the missiological challenge of the city?

Filed Under: Church Evangelism, Church Planting, Evangelism, Evangelist, Pastors, Video Tagged With: Church Planting, city reaching, Evangelism, lausanne, Tim Keller, urban ministry

MAY 26, 2012 BY **EVANGELISMCOACH** 4 COMMENTS

What is Evangelism? A Definition Discussion

Year ago, I was standing in the lunch line at the seminary cafeteria. A classmate and I were discussing themes in our evangelism class when a fellow student from another class interrupted:

> "Are you talking about the *E-word*?" In our class, we were talking about evangelism and its connections to American Imperialism."

Huh?

[Read more…]

Filed Under: definition, Evangelism Tagged With: definition,definition of evangelism, gospel

APRIL 26, 2012 BY **EVANGELISMCOACH** 1 COMMENT

Does an invitation to church equal evangelism?

Every weekend, we challenge our church members to invite someone to the next sermon series.

Each week, we call our church members to invite someone to small group.

You probably do it to.

In fact, many people would rather give a church invitationthan personally share the gospel.

Have you seen that happen?

I have.

Does an invitation to church equal evangelism?

A recent conversation I've been participating in is

> Yes or No: Does an invitation to church equal evangelism?

If one holds to a technical definition of evangelism as proclamation of the gospel, then a church invitation is not evangelism.

The definition of evangelism usually involves the announcement of our sinful condition before God and God's remedy in Christ.

An invitation to church has nothing to do with the proclamation of the gospel.

Sure, it's a triggering event to hear the gospel.

But the act of inviting someone to church is not evangelism.

Is a church invitation an evangelistic activity?

I consider evangelism as the entire process

- of a person awakening to their spiritual restlessness
- seeking answers to that restlessness
- hearing how Jesus is the way God satisfies that thirst.
- hearing about our sinful condition before God.
- hearing the proclamation of Jesus as Lord and our need to repent
- the call to place faith in Christ and live as a follower of Jesus.

If one considers evangelism as a process or journey that has many elements to it, than an invitation to church is one element.

It's an evangelistic element.

It's a link in the chain of the evangelistic journey, so to speak. (See this video about links in the evangelism chain)

Every conversation about faith, every rumination in the late night hours, every invitation to church, every sermon heard, every bible verse read, every small group conversation all become "seeds" that that the Lord uses in the drawing process.

> John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him, and I will raise him up on the last day."

An invitation to church can be part of the drawing process.

It's an evangelistic activity.

> When two of John's disciples overheard John say, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" they followed Jesus.
>
> Jesus turned and asked, "What are you looking for?"
>
> They responded, ""Rabbi where are you staying?"
>
> Jesus said, "Come and see." "They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day." John 1:35-39 (NRSV)

Even the disciples were invited to spend time in the presence of Jesus.

Then Andrew turned to his brother and invited him: "Come and see."

Different levels of evangelistic activity

As I mention in this post in Growing from Witness to Evangelist, there are different levels of evangelistic activity.

I have found this little tool helpful to offer to people in my seminars. Here is how to use it:

Take a moment and place yourself on that scale.

1. Where are you most comfortable?
2. What can you do in the next 6 months to move to the next level?

Then offer a sharing time and have people set a goal for their personal growth in evangelism.

(Image Credit for Child in the Road: Image Credit)

Filed Under: Church Evangelism, Evangelism, Personal invitations Tagged With: church evangelism, church invitations, journey,Personal Evangelism

Warning: strpos(): Empty needle in **/home/churchgr/public_html/www.evangelismcoach.org/wp-includes/media.php** on line **1147**

NOVEMBER 7, 2011 BY **EVANGELISMCOACH** **1 COMMENT**

5 Ways to Bless Your Missionaries for Christmas

Christmas is coming!

You've likely seen stores already putting Christmas stuff out, and the shopping season gets longer. I started seeing Christmas stuff in late September. . .

During this time of year, many churches put together various outreaches to care for their community. We have done various shoebox programs and angel tree programs – all to help complete strangers

with something they wanted or needed.

Right now, we are gathering clothing to hand deliver to Nicaragua via a friend who is travelling there. But that is completely anonymous help for people our church will likely never know.

Don't forget your missionaries this Christmas

Along with those outreaches, I want to encourage your church to remember your full time missionaries who are on the field.

Many of your churches support missionaries with monthly or annual gifts and lots of prayer.

Your gifts enable full time servants of the Lord (often living in cross cultural mission fields) spend themselves on behalf of the gospel of Christ.

They sacrificially live on the margins to enable the gospel to go forth to as many as possible.

> (If your church does not yet support missionaries, I can connect you with a few recommendations. Just email me via the contact form).

When supporting your missionaries at Christmas . . .

Christmas is a great time for your church to provide some personal care of their family, plus a chance to strengthen your ties with them.

I want to remind your church of three things about doing this.

1. Focus first on the missionary's family, rather than their field projects.

Living cross culturally can be extremely stressful. Learn about what the family needs and how your church can provide care them as people.

Talk with them, find ways to pray for them and then do it.

After you have found ways to bless your missionary personally, then talk about some their projects.

If your missionaries have been away from your church for a while, they can feel lonely as well. Encouraging phone calls and letters from home may have slowed way down. Some missionaries never hear from their supporting church other than a check that shows up in their account each month.

> Personal contact means a lot to your missionary on the field.

Use this Christmas time to focus on their family needs and perhaps rekindle that personal relationship.

2. Work directly with them on how to get what is needed.

It might be easier in some cases to send money so the missionary can buy local.

I know of one group that wanted to send their missionary some clothing they had gathered, but didn't realize that the missionary needed to spend $300 to pay for import duties and taxes. Another group wanted to send 40 lbs of stuffed animals. That would have cost the local missionary $225 to receive that box.

Simply sending a heavy box with $500 worth of stuff may be more harmful than helpful.

> Talk with your missionary to find out how to get stuff to them.

3. Work with your missionary to coordinate with other churches.

Many of your missionaries may have various supporting churches.

Keep clear communication open so that your missionary doesn't receive 17 of the same thing.

After your conversation with your missionary, settle on a few particular needs that your church will take on.

Let me suggest 5 ways you can bless your

missionary:

Here are 5 ways how to find out what missionary needs

1. Talk with them by Skype or Telephone.

Find a way to connect and have a conversation.

A call from church members is an emotional boost. This doesn't have to be the missions chairperson. It could be anybody. When a missionary has been away for more than 12 months, those contacts slow down and leave the missionary feeling somewhat disconnected.

> Have a cup of tea with them over a skype video call. Find ways to pray for them as a family.

2. Ask the missionary about personal family need that you can fix.

What is something that would take a "rough edge" off their life for which they simply don't have available funds?

- Perhaps they have a broken piece of furniture, but no available or budgeted funds to fix it.
- Perhaps they need a dishwasher.
- Perhaps they need funds to fix a window, paint a room, or replace a toilet.

You might send them funds to fix it, or if practical, send a team to fix some of these things.

I know one missionary who wept in gratitude when a church helped them with a new pair of sandals, a box of Victoria Secret perfumes, and a particular napkin holder for their table.

> What is something they need that would reduce a constant stressor in their life?

3. Donate frequent flyer miles.

A missionary family should be able to visit with their home churches and family members on a regular basis. But getting flight for a family of four can run anywhere from $2000-$4000 or more.

Frequent flyer miles can go a long way to enabling this kind of member care. Work with your missionary to find out how to make that happen.

Help them see their family or make their trip home for their partner development

4. Ask if there is a technology product or service they need.

Many missionaries live off of donated and terribly outdated equipment.

Perhaps they could use an updated / upgraded mobile phone. Perhaps an Ipad or Amazon Kindle. Maybe your missionaries are functioning with a 7 year old laptop with outdated software.

Maybe the humidity in some climates has destroyed their old computers from rust. Maybe they need that video projector for their training events, or even a video camera and wireless microphone for some of their work.

You get the idea. Find out what they need and work with them to acquire it. Remember, it might be easiest to acquire locally rather than shipping it.

Find out what your church can raise funds to upgrade or provide.

5. Ask if you can provide a "mental health" weekend.

Living cross culturally can be extremely stressful and a weekend away at a nice place can bring a sense of restoration back to your missionary.

Most missionaries I know live on such a shoe string budget that spending a weekend at a resort or in a mountain vacation home is hardly ever on a calendar.

Perhaps there is a nice place within a 2-3 hour drive from where your missionary lives. Ask about the cost of a full weekend at a nice place, and include the cost of transportation, gas, and food and tips.

I'm not talking about $20,000 family vacations, but maybe $500-$1000 for a weekend somewhere.

What can you provide to give your missionary a respite break?